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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S INTRODUCTORY CALL WITH PRESIDENT SARGSIAN

Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador's introductory courtesy call with President Sargsian, following presentation of her credentials, highlighted progress on relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan (Nagorno Karabakh) peace negotiations. Sargsian expressed thanks for robust U.S. assistance for Armenia. He called for greater U.S. investment in Armenia, as well as for more favorable Armenian access to the U.S. market. Sargsian assured of his strong support and that of his government, to strengthen and broaden the bilateral relationship. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) President Sargsian warmly welcomed Ambassador Yovanovitch's arrival after the long vacancy in that position. He expressed hope that her arrival will mark a new phase in expanded bilateral cooperation -- which he characterized as already strong. He said that he put a very high value on Armenia's relationship with the United States. The President thanked Ambassador for the nearly \$2 billion worth of U.S. assistance to Armenia over the past 20 years, as well as for U.S. support of World Bank and IMF loans to Armenia, which have amounted to substantial additional funds.

The Ambassador commented that Armenia had also contributed to the relationship, for example, by sending troops to Kosovo and Iraq at U.S. behest in support of international peacekeeping missions. The Ambassador also thanked Sargsian for Armenia's help during the Russia-Georgia crisis to evacuate both Georgian refugees and official and non-official Americans from Georgia.

¶3. (C) Sargsian thanked the United States for its efforts in promoting peace and stability in the region, including our facilitation of efforts to build rapprochement with Turkey as well as our role as a Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship country to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Sargsian stressed that he is hopeful that, with U.S. help, an agreement on N-K can be reached soon based on compromises from both sides. He expressed satisfaction with the thaw that had been achieved with Turkey, and commented that Armenian society now has great optimism that this will lead to normal diplomatic and trade relations with Turkey, and an open border. The Ambassador warmly complimented Sargsian in her brief public remarks in the credentialing ceremony, and then in the courtesy call, for his courageous leadership in making the invitation to Turkish President Gul to visit Armenia, noting that this has the potential to launch a truly historic transformation of the regional reality. She noted that the Secretary and EUR A/S Dan Fried looked forward to seeing President Sargsian in New York on the margins of UNGA, and hoped to discuss further the potential for additional breakthroughs in the Armenia-Turkish relationship. She expressed hope that Sargsian's and FM Nalbandian's discussions in New York with Turkish and Azerbaijani leaders would be fruitful.

¶4. (C) Sargsian said much would depend on what specific

proposals the Turkish side would bring to the conversation, noting his strong desire to achieve normal relations and belief that that is achievable. He expressed concerns about the Turkish approach to the discussion, worrying that it risked getting too bogged down in Turkish determination to over-emphasize a historical commission. He preferred an approach that would give primacy to the establishment of relations and accentuate areas of cooperation between the two countries, rather than putting so much focus on the most difficult bilateral disagreement. He hoped Turkey could be persuaded to lighten its emphasis on the history issue, and agree to subsume this into a broader discussion on building the bilateral Turkish-Armenian relationship. The historical issue is an important one, to be sure, but just one of many that need to be discussed.

YOVANOVITCH